

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 OMB-01 TRSE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00
PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02
PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-15 /070 W
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R 231419Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 535
INFO EC COLLECTIVE
USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS
USNMR SHAPE
USCINCEUR

UNCLAS SECTION 1 OF 2 THE HAGUE 2662

USNMR SHAPE FOR POLAD

USCINCEUR FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: NA
TAGS: PINT NL
SUBJECT: DUTCH ELECTIONS: HOW HOLLAND CAMPAIGNS

1. SUMMARY: WITH NATIONAL ELECTIONS UPON THEM, DUTCH VOTERS HAVE BEEN TREATED TO A CAMPAIGN THAT INSPIRES YAWNS. EXCEPT FOR THE SIGHT OF CAMPAIGN POSTERS PLACED ON OFFICIALLY APPROVED BILLBOARDS AND IN HOME WINDOWS, THE CASUAL VISITOR TO THE NETHERLANDS COULD BE EXCUSED FOR NOT KNOWING THAT AN ELECTION WAS IN FULL SWING. LEADERS OF THE THREE BIG PARTIES GARNER MOST OF THE ATTENTION, BUT EVEN THEY WIND UP ON THE BACK PAGES. DESPITE THE UNOBTRUSIVENESS OF THE DUTCH CAMPAIGN, A LARGE TURNOUT IS EXPECTED ON WEDNESDAY TO CHOOSE 150 CANDIDATES FOR THE SECOND CHAMBER OF THE STATES GENERAL, THE FIRST STEP IN DETERMINING WHO WILL GOVERN HOLLAND OVER THE NEXT FOUR YEARS. END SUMMARY.

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2. THE 1977 ELECTION CAMPAIGN IN THE NETHERLANDS WHICH CULMINATES WITH VOTING MAY 25 HAS FAILED TO CATCH FIRE. PARTY LEADERS, ESPECIALLY LABOR'S DEN UYL, THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS' VAN AGT AND THE LIBERALS' WIEGEL, HAVE BECOME THE FOCUS OF WHATEVER ATTENTION THE PUBLIC CAN MUSTER AS EACH TRIES TO LEAD HIS PARTY TO "VICTORY." IN-DEPTH DISCUSSION OF THE ISSUES, A PROCESS DUTCH POLITICIANS

HAVE PRIDED THEMSELVES ON IN THE PAST, HAS BEEN SLIGHTED TO SOME EXTENT BY THE DOMINANCE ACCORDED LEADING PERSONALITIES. UNEMPLOYMENT, NOW STANDING AT 5.1 PERCENT HAS GOTTEN MOST ATTENTION, BUT OTHER DOMESTIC ISSUES, PARTICULARLY WAGE POLICY, HOUSING AND THE INVESTMENT CLIMATE IN THE NETHERLANDS, HAVE ALSO BEEN OF MAJOR CONCERN. VOTERS CAN ALSO BE EXPECTED TO WEIGH THE PROS AND CONS OF LABOR'S COMMITMENT TO THE FURTHER EQUALIZATION OF INCOMES, KNOWLEDGE AND POWER, A GOAL TOWARD WHICH THE SOCIALISTS FEEL THEY HAVE MADE SOME PROGRESS DURING THE LAST FOUR YEARS. FOREIGN POLICY AND DEFENSE HAVE BEEN OF ONLY MINOR CONCERN ALTHOUGH THE LIBERALS HAVE SELDOM MISSED A CHANCE TO QUESTION THE HIGHLY PERSONAL AND PROGRESSIVE DEVELOPMENT AID POLICY FOLLOWED BY THE SOCIALIST MINISTER OF DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION JAN PRONK.

3. SMALL PARTIES, A FIXTURE ON THE DUTCH SCENE (14 PARTIES SAT IN THE LAST STATES GENERAL AND 25 ARE CAMPAGINING NOW) ARE ALMOST FORGOTTEN, YET THE HIGHLY DEVELOPED PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION SYSTEM USED HERE GUARANTEES THEIR CONTINUED NATIONAL EXISTENCE AND A PLACE FOR SOME OF THEM IN A FUTURE COALITION. DESPITE HALF-HEARTED ATTEMPTS IN THE PAST TO INCREASE THE PERCENTAGE OF THE VOTE REQUIRED TO WIN A SEAT, THE DUTCH DESIRE TO GIVE ALL GROUPS THEIR SAY WON WON OUT GUARANTEEING THAT ANY PARTY POLLING TWO-THIRDS OF A PERCENT WILL ENTER THE SECOND CHAMBER. ALTHOUGH SMALL PARTIES WILL CONTINUE TO PLAY A ROLE HERE, THE CONCENTRATION ON THE UNCLASSIFIED

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BIG PARTIES OF THE LEFT, RIGHT AND CENTER HAS NOT BEEN CAPRICIOUS. THEY DOMINATE DUTCH POLITICS MORE THAN EVER BEFORE AND SOME OF THE SMALL PARTIES ARE FEELING THE SQUEEZE.

4. FROM OUTWARD APPEARANCES IT SEEMS AS IF LITTLE IS HAPPENING, ALTHOUGH THE CAMPAIGN HAS BEEN UNDERWAY FOR THE PAST MONTH. CAMPAIGN POSTERS -43, AS A RULE, ONLY PLACED ON OFFICIAL BILLBOARDS WHICH HAVE BEEN ERECTED FOR THE CAMPAIGN. THE SMALL SIZE OF THE POSTERS (ABOUT 2X3 FEET) AND THE NUMBER OF DIFFERENT ONES ON A SINGLE BILLBOARD MAKES THEM DIFFICULT TO IDENTIFY. MORE VISIBLE ARE THOSE THAT MANY PLACE IN THEIR WINDOWS AT HOME. RADIO AND TELEVISION TIME AVAILABLE FOR POLITICAL BROADCASTS, WHILE INCREASED DURING ELECTION

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PERIODS, IS STILL SEVERELY RESTRICTED (10-20 MINUTES
EXTRA EACH DAY) AND IS DIVIDED EQUALLY AMONG THE
PARTIES. AS PARTIES ARE FORBIDDEN TO BUY AIR TIME,
SATURATION POLITICAL BRADCASTING IS IMPOSSIBLE.
UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, DUTCH POLITICANS CAMPAING
MORE LIKE AMERICAN CONGRESSMEN, CRISSCROSSING THEIR
DISTRICT--IN THIS CASE THERI COUNTRY--STOPPING AT
SHOPPING CENTERS, FACTORIES AND CITY CENTERS AND
WINDING UP EACH DAY AT POLITICAL RALLIES.

5. WITH ALL PARTY LEADERS AND SECOND ECHELON FIGURES
SPEAKING IN SEVERAL PLACES EACH DAY, THE POSSIBILITY
FOR MAKING NEWS WITH NOTEWORTHY PRONOUNCEMENTS OR BLUNDERS
WOULD SEEM ENORMOUS. OUT THE DUTCH PRESS SELDOM FINDS
ANYTHING CONNECTED TO THE CAMPAIGN WORTHY OF THE FRONT
PAGES. INSTEAD THE PRACTICE IS TO BURY ELECTION NEWS IN
SPECIAL HALF OR QUARTER PAGES BLOCKS DEEP INSIDE THE
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NEWSPAPERS. PRACTICALLY THE ONLY NEWS WHICH HAS ESCAPED
TO THE FRONT PAGES THUS FAR HAS BEEN OF THE
NEGATIVE SORT, RLEATED TO THE RACIST DUTCH PEOPLES UNION

(THE HAGUE 2619) OR TO DISRUPTIONS AT CAMPAIGN MEETINGS, PRINCIPALLY THOSE IN WHICH CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC LEADER VAN AGT WAS THE SPEAKER. EARLY IN THE CAMPAIGN VAN AGT OFTEN FACED RUDE AUDIENCES AS WOMEN OPPOSING HIS ABORTION POLICIES AND UNRULY YOUNG PUNKS SHOUTED HIM DOWN. SITUATION BECAME SO BAD THAT DEN UYL AND WIEGEL JOINED WITH VAN AGT IN ASKING THAT SPEAKERS BE GIVEN A CHANCE TO BE HEARD. VAN AGT'S OPPONENTS ARE CONCERNED THAT HE COULD REAP A SYMPATHY VOTE AND LABOR PARTY LEADERS FEAR A BACKLASH AGAINST THEIR PARTY.

6. MORE THAN AT ANY TIME IN YEARS, THE 1977 CAMPAIGN HAS FOCUSED PRIMARILY ON THREE INDIVIDUALS. PRIMIN DEN UYL OF THE SOCIALIST (PVDA), VICE PREMIER AND JUSTICE MINISTER VAN AGT (CDA) AND THE LIBERAL (VVD) OPPOSITION LEADER WIEGEL. THE THREE ARE JOINTLY AND SEPARATELY RUNNING AGAINST EACH OTHER, AWARE ALL THE WHILE THAT VAN AGT'S CDA HOLDS THE KEY TO THE SUBSEQUENT GOVERNMENT FORMATION VIA A CDA-PVDA OR A CDA-VVD COALITION. DEN UYL AND WIEGEL HAVE HAD ONE RATHER LACKLUSTER TELEVISION DEBATE AND ON ELECTION EVE A SERIES OF TV DEBATES ARE SCHEDULED: DEN UYL-WIEGEL, DEN UYL-VAN AGT, WIEGEL-VAN AGT AND VAN AGT-DEN UYL. IT IS UNCLEAR WHETHER THOSE LAST MINUTE CHANCES TO COMPARE THE THREE WILL BE INSTRUMENTAL IN HELPING UNDECIDED VOTERS TO MAKE UP THEIR MINDS. AS IS TRADITIONAL HERE, VOTERS WILL FIND THEIR MAIL BOXES CRAMMED WITH PARTY PROPAGANDA ON ELECTION MORNING.

7. ALTHOUGH THE CAMPAIGN HAS BEEN DREARY BY AMERICAN STANDARDS, AND EVEN BY THOSE IN SOME OTHER EUROPEAN COUNTRIES, A TURNOUT OF MORE THAN 70 PERCENT IS EXPECTED MAY 25. AT STAKE IMMEDIATELY ARE 150 SEATS IN THE
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SECOND CHAMBER, BUT THE OUTCOME WILL ALSO BE A BELLWETHER FOR FORMATION OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT. WHILE POLITICIANS ARE THEORETICALLY FREE TO PUT TOGETHER ANY SORT OF COALITION THAT CAN COMMAND A MAJORITY IN THE SECOND CHAMBER, THEY WILL LOOK TO THE MAY 25 VOTE AS A GUIDE. THUS THE SHOWING THIS WEEK BY THE BIG THREE (PVDA, CDA AND VVD) WILL PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN DETERMINING WHETHER DUTCHMEN HAVE A LEFT CENTER OR RIGHT CENTER GOVERNMENT IN THE FUTURE.

8. FOREGOING DRAFTED PRIOR TO HOSTAGE ACTIONS WHICH WE ARE REPORTING BY SEPTTEL. FOR THE MOMENT, CAMPAIGNING HAS BEEN SUSPENDED.
MCCLOSKEY

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